

4 NORTH POINT

This long circular walk is aimed at the enthusiastic walker but makes a perfect day-long outing, particularly on a fine, calm summer's day. It packs in wildlife viewing, saving the stunning Sandy Bay for the end of the route, and provides a real sense of achievement on reaching the North Point of Bleaker Island as well as when arriving home again. Shorter versions are easy to create too! The walk mixes vehicle tracks with easy coastlines; the walker often being able to choose a preferred option.

Main route

Leave the settlement via the wind turbine, passing through two gates along the beach track heading for the shearing shed. Go through the gate to pass the shearing shed on its southern side, walking around it and through another gate to head along the coast initially in a north-westerly direction. There is a clear vehicle track.

Follow the coastline for the best views and wildlife. There are various points en-route where vehicle tracks deviate from the coast which the walker may choose to follow to save some time, taking care to maintain a roughly northerly direction outbound and southerly on return. The following description sticks to the coastline.

The coast bends west to Lafonia Point, before leading around next to Gull Point after about an hour's walking. The gentoo penguin colony can be seen on the hill to the right. About 0.5km further on is a gate. Go through the gate and continue to First Neck. In this area, there are frequent remains washed ashore from two nearby shipwrecks, the "Gleam" and the "Hattie". There is a plethora of birdlife in this section including gulls, southern giant petrels, striated caracara, many shore birds and small birds.

Walk on through a pretty little bay with very low "cliffs" on approach to Long Grass Valley (so named as this is the only extensive 'White Grass' found on the island). The vegetation eventually gives way to an eroded area of land, then a gate is reached, just before Third Neck. Rock cormorants and flightless steamer ducks usually inhabit the clay area.

Go through the gate. From here it is just over 1km to reach the most northerly point of the island. This final section after Third Neck, where there may be giant petrel nests, is a pleasant open plain, very green and with widespread

tussac stands. This is a habitat restoration area where tussac grass has been planted to prevent further erosion and to enhance habitat for native species. The tussac provides perfect shelter for lunchtime.

Follow the coast around North Point. Look out for blow holes and sea caves here. Follow the low cliffs around to return to Third Neck. These northern cliffs are covered in rock cormorants and nesting skuas in summer months. Keep left to follow the east coast, walking now in a south-easterly direction. Magellanic penguins have dense burrow areas at several points along this eastern coastline; take care not to tread on these. Cross the stile; the coastline is now characterised by coves and small cliffs.

Pass back through Second Neck and then First Neck, at the latter passing to the left hand side of the pond. Both these Necks have pretty boulder beaches with sand exposed at low tides. A gate is reached after approximately 700m from First Neck and the beautiful sand beach of Sandy Bay is now in clear view. On Penguin Hill there are breeding colonies of gentoo penguins. Continue through the gate and along the coast.

On reaching the beach, drop down to it and enjoy walking along the sand. Watch out for animals and birds entering and exiting the sea, taking care not to impede their path. This a great spot to see surfing gentoo penguins. Semaphore Hill is



easy to see to the right. Keep walking along the beach until drawing level with Ghost Island and reaching the end of the main sandy part. Over to the right is a fence-line with a narrow wooden gate. This lift-up gate is the route to the settlement. Semaphore Hill is visible immediately beyond it.

Go through the lift-up gate and walk straight ahead, so taking a course to the right of Semaphore Hill. This leads past the north end of Big Pond (over to the right-hand side) through slightly lower ground but climbs to a lower level communications mast, which looks like an old-fashioned telegraph pole.

At this mast the settlement comes into view. Walk down to the stile (wooden steps), along the fence-line and through the gate to return to the settlement.

Walk shorter

Turn-around options are easy at the isthmuses of both First Neck and Second Neck. Simply turn right and head to the east coast to begin walking south. Vehicle tracks generally provide faster, more direct routes than the coastline route described.

Tips:

Take binoculars to make the most of wildlife watching opportunities.

From September to mid-January, the eggs and chicks of giant petrels are very vulnerable to predator attack; please ask for advice before setting out to determine locations and stay well inland.



Countryside Code

1. Always ask for permission before entering private land.
2. Keep to paths wherever possible. Leave gates, open or shut, as you find them.
3. Be aware of the high fire risk throughout the islands; particularly when lighting fires, BBQs or smoking.
4. Do not litter*. Take your rubbish home with you or use a bin provided
5. Never feed, touch, handle, injure or kill any wild bird or animal*.
6. Always give animals the right of way. Do not block the routes of birds or animals coming home to their colonies. Do not startle or chase wildlife from resting or breeding areas*.
7. Prevent disturbance to wild birds and animals. Always stay on the outside of colonies and remain at least 6 m (20 ft) away.
8. When taking photographs or filming, stay low to the ground. Move slowly and quietly. Make sure your flash is turned off*. Always be aware of the location of your camera and equipment, including "selfie-sticks". Do not use this to get closer to wildlife.
9. Some plants are protected and should not be picked*. Wildflowers are there for all to enjoy.
10. Whalebones, skulls, eggs, etc. may not be exported from the Falkland Islands*. They should be left where they are found.
11. Do not disfigure rocks or buildings*.

*Such actions may constitute an offence in the Falkland Islands and could result in significant fines.

Stay Safe

Seek local advice before heading out on any walk. Weather changes quickly, the terrain can be tough and there may be areas to avoid at certain times of year due to breeding wildlife and the farming calendar. Always tell someone where you are going with an estimated return time. Ensure you have plenty to eat and drink along with additional warm clothing.

Bleaker Island is a working sheep and cattle farm and has many gates and these should be used wherever possible. However, fences can be crossed if necessary. Signs show electrification but this is only at certain times of year. Ask before setting out. Please respect fences, stepping over or through the wires not onto them, and leave all gates as found; they are there for a reason!

Self-Guided WALKS

BLEAKER ISLAND THE NORTH

Flora & Fauna highlights

Black-chinned siskin	Magellanic oystercatcher	Two-banded plover
Blackish oystercatcher	Magellanic penguin	Upland goose
Black-throated finch	Patagonian crested duck	White-rumped sand piper
Brown-hooded gull	Rock cormorant	White-tufted grebe
Chiloe widgeon	Rockhopper penguin	
Dark-faced ground tyrant	Ruddy-headed goose	
Dolphin gull	Rhufous-chested dotterel	Diddle dee
Falklands flightless steamer duck	Silvery grebe	Christmas bush
Falklands pipit	Silver teal	Lady's slipper
Falklands thrush	Skua	Pig vine
Gentoo penguin	Snowy sheathbill	Scurvy Grass
Grass wren	South American snipe	Sea cabbage
Imperial cormorant	Southern caracara	Small fern
Kelp goose	Southern giant petrel	Tussac grass
Kelp gull	Speckled teal	Yellow violet
Long tailed meadowlark	Striated caracara	
	Tussac bird	



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Self-Guided

WALKS

BLEAKER ISLAND THE NORTH

Bleaker Island was first named Long Island then became Breaker Island after the large waves that crash on the shore.

This beautiful island has attractive coastlines with a stunning long beach, Sandy Bay, and pretty ponds. There are many seabirds, waterfowl and song birds to observe. The shores are also home to sealions and to rare species of plants.



1 ROCKHOPPERS, TUSSAC & CORMORANTS

This relatively short walk passes alongside imperial cormorant colonies and rockhopper penguins as well as a wealth of other birdlife. It finishes in Pebbly Bay with the relaxing sounds of waves "bubbling" to-and-fro, the chance to spot the Falklands' only butterfly and some rare plants. En-route are spectacular views across the island and an adventurous trek through the tussac fringe. Even in the winter it's an interesting walk simply to enjoy the sights and sounds of the waves crashing in on the shoreline. The walk is initially along an easy track but then involves careful footing through the tussac.

Main route

Begin the walk in an east-north-east direction towards the gorse hedge, passing to the left of the gorse then through a gate. Follow the vehicle track; Semaphore Hill, with the communication mast, is to the left-hand side. The settlement imperial cormorant colony is on the right after around 0.5km of walking. These birds are more active from late afternoon onwards.

Continue along the vehicle track with the fence-line to the left, reaching the coastline after another 0.5 km. Turn right, so the coast is to the left, and head in a southerly direction towards the tussac grass. There are several hundred Magellanic penguins along the coast in this area in summer. Keep to the track closest to the fence-line on the left and look for a gate through it, approximately 300m along from the turning point.

Go through the gate* and down towards the shore to discover the colonies of rockhopper penguins, imperial cormorants and other birdlife. Around to the left is Long Gulch – an impressive inlet of sea heading inland. This is a good place to see rock cormorants and some raptor species. Go to the head of Long Gulch for a great sheltered picnic spot. Walk right around to the far side of the gulch to see the Rockhopper landing platform from the north.



2 PENGUINS, PONDS & VISTAS

If there is only time for one walk, this is the one to do! In summer months, it includes at least three species of penguin, imperial cormorants, the most beautiful beach of Bleaker Island and the eponymous Big Pond which teems with birdlife. Marauding sea lions may be seen trying to catch a quick snack and there are many stunning views. The island's highest point can also be included. The walk is on moderate terrain with vehicle tracks to follow in parts and, of course, routes along the sandy beach. There are some sections which cut across heathland.

Main route

Begin the walk in an east-north-east direction from the cottages towards the gorse hedge, passing to the left of the gorse then through a gate. Rather than following the vehicle track, begin to cut right just after this gate to head across the middle-dee heathland to the south side of the imperial cormorant colony. Once the tussac fringe comes into view, aim to the left hand (northern) end and look for a gate into the tussac area. Go through this gate and walk towards the shore to find rockhopper penguins and imperial cormorants. Walk to the left and observe rock cormorants nesting in Long Gulch.

After time with these birds, retrace the route back to the gate and go through it to join a vehicle track. Turn right to head in a northerly direction along the track with the sea to the right-hand side. The track passes through one gate after around 300m and another after about 1km. At the latter Big Pond is clearly visible to the left and the beach in the near-distance to the right. At this point, beach enthusiasts can cut across to the right towards a pedestrian lift-up gate and join the beach at its most southerly end. Those who prefer tracks can continue to another gate around 700m away, close to the north-east end of Big Pond, then wend a way down to the beach across the greens and through the sea-cabbage. There is a plethora of wildlife to enjoy along the beach including gentoo penguins en-route and both gentoo and Magellanic penguins at the northern end. The whole beach is around 1.5km long.

Tips:

Plan to lunch at the north end of Sandy Bay to enjoy the gentoo penguins 'surfing' onto the beach and glorious views. Look out for visiting penguin species, king penguins amongst the gentoos and macaroni penguins are sometimes in with the rockhoppers.

Turn right to walk along the headland, respecting the wildlife and taking great care where there is a need to head into the tussac; look and listen for wildlife and watch footfall as the ground can be very uneven. Stay close to the cliffs all the way. Cross the fence where it meets the end of Short Gulch, then cross back into the tussac following the shoreline to the left. After 20 minutes walk a fence is reached by a natural arch where night-herons nest.

Cross the stile and continue along the coast. Pebbly Bay is within view and the outermost house of the settlement ("The Outlook") is to the right-hand side. Drop down to the bay when safe to do so, to enjoy the sights and sounds. Rare lady's slippers and yellow violets can be found here in early summer. The Queen of Falklands Fritillary butterfly can usually be observed on quiet, warm days all on the raised beach above Pebbly Bay.

To leave Pebbly Bay, walk west to the fence-line. Do not cross the fence, turn right and walk alongside it. After a short distance, there is a fence "corner", cross the stile here.

Walk shorter

*To avoid walking extensively through the tussac fringe and climbing of fences, simply enjoy the wildlife viewing opportunities as soon as the colonies are reached through the gate. Return through the gate to the vehicle track which leads back to the settlement.

To add on Pebbly Bay via a different route - look for a small stile by "The Outlook"; go over the stile and simply head downwards to the Bay.

Tips:

Allow a longer length of time in summer to enjoy watching the wildlife. Take care walking through the tussac grass; large animals may be hiding within, the ground is always uneven and the low cliffs are regularly hidden by tussac grass stands.

As the sandy section comes to an end, turn left and double-back to head inland. There is an easy vehicle track to follow which leads first to several small ponds (which dry out in summer). Walk either side of these ponds but be sure to cut across further inland to head down the western side of Big Pond to enjoy the best viewing places for waterfowl. Black-necked swans, Chiloë widgeon, silvery and white tufted grebes, speckled and silver teal and the rare flying steamer duck may be seen.

Continue to the southern end of Big Pond to meet a fence-line running roughly north-south. To return to the settlement cross the stile and follow the fence up the valley, then drop down into the settlement and use the stile and gate to return. To take a slightly lower route, stay on the western side of the fence and follow it over the lower rise then using the gate near the gardens.



3 EASTERN COAST

This flexible out-and-back walk can be varied to fill as much time as wished. The low cliffs to the east of the settlement are scenically attractive and a great place to explore with pretty coves and inlets, relaxing sounds, seabirds, shorebirds and songbirds. It provides opportunities for artistic photography and there are magnificent views along the coastline including out to the eastern tussac islands. Look out for Sei whale blows and soaring albatross along this coast beyond the kelp line in late summer and autumn. The walk is mainly over gentle terrain but take care on slippery rocks and don't step too close to the edge!

Main route

Begin the walk in an east-north-east direction towards the gorse hedge, passing to the left of the gorse then through a gate. Follow the vehicle track; Semaphore Hill, with the communication mast, is to the left-hand side. The settlement imperial cormorant colony is on the right after around 0.5km of walking. Continue along the vehicle track with the fence-line over to the left, reaching the coastline after another 0.5 km.

Turn left, follow the vehicle track through a gate. Carancho Cove is to the right; keep walking along the coastline as far as wished along the bluff of land. Birds can be seen on the greens, the cliffs and the shoreline. Rock cormorants breed along lengthy stretches of this coast line. Terns sometimes nest here. The views along the coastline are superb with Sandy Bay Island generally in view and Ghost Island appearing if the walk is taken far enough. There are some fences to cross, depending on walking distance. Stiles are provided along the coast. At the time of writing, plans are in-hand to plant tussac along the far eastern section.

Turn around when the time feels right to return to the settlement via the coast or in a more direct line, noting, of course, that walking back is likely to be a little faster!

Walk further

Keen walkers may wish to use this route as an add-on to "penguins, ponds & vistas"; after visiting the rockhoppers, rather than following the vehicle track to cut off this bluff, simply walk around the coastline to reach the south end of Sandy Bay. Add around an hour to the anticipated walk time for that trail.

Tips:

Sit, relax, listen and enjoy the calming sounds of the sea and the wildlife. Look for photographic opportunities such as swirling kelp in the sea and the vibrant oranges or subdued grey hues of the lichen on the rocks.

